

Westminster Heights

WESTMINSTER AVENUE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES: A group of eleven residences on the north and south sides of Westminster Avenue (1910 South) east of 1300 East including the north end of View Street (1340 East) and the intersection of Westminster Avenue and 1400 East. These include 1304, 1340 and 1388 on the south side of the street and 1341, 1343, 1357, 1363, 1369, 1375, 1379 and 1403 on the north side.

MAP:

The recommended Westminster Avenue Conservation District comprises a portion of the original Westminster Heights Subdivision developed by brothers Clark O. and Earl Dunshee during the first two decades of this century. A segment of Westminster Avenue between 1300 East and 1500 East (see map) is architecturally significant for its concentration of individualized representations of the Craftsman and California bungalow types, together with Mission and Pueblo styles uncommon to Salt Lake City. Historically the area is notable as the first residential subdivision to be developed on the city's southeast bench and for its association with the Dunshee brothers, who are credited with introducing the strict residential building restrictions which came to characterize the many east bench subdivisions which followed Westminster Heights.

The neighborhood character of this district is unified by mature landscaping and a consistency of building quality, set backs and side yards. There is an overall feeling of conformity in architectural styles due to the period of development, despite some infill of more recent dwellings including a few which are not of the historic period. The streetscape is linear, rising at a slight incline from the brow of the bench at 1300 East and is shaded by rows of trees possibly planted during the time of development. This section of Westminster Avenue is paved with concrete, while side walks in front of the original Dunshee built houses are flanked by cobblerock retaining walls unique to this district. 1400 East Street is interrupted at Westminster Avenue and the consequent lack of cross traffic contributes to the quiet residential atmosphere of the area.

Natives of Fairfield, Iowa, the Dunshee brothers came to Utah with their parents as young men. Their father, Alfred, was for a time involved in Salt Lake City real estate just after the turn of the century. While boarding with their parents both Clark and Earl were employed by the Salt Lake Herald; Clark as chief editor and Earl as circulation manager. Earl left the paper in 1906 to enter the local real estate business. His brother joined him a short time later and together they initiated Westminster Heights in 1908.

The Dunshees acted as realtors, selling lots through their firm, Westminster Investment Company. They were also housebuilders and in collaboration with architect Arthur J. Hamilton, lent their own touches to the stylistic character of the houses they erected, specializing in "Swiss Chalet", Mission and Pueblo bungalow motifs. Hamilton, formerly of Seattle, worked as an architect in Salt Lake City from 1908 to 1910, residing at 1911 Redondo Avenue in Westminster Heights. Other Salt Lake houses known to have been designed by Hamilton include an architecturally significant bungalow at 877 East 200 South for cigar wholesaler Oscar E. Hemenway, a two story brick house at 240 South 1300 East, and a two story frame residence at 49 South

900 East (demolished). All were built c. 1910. After 1910 Hamilton is no longer listed as an architect in the Salt Lake City directories.

The Dunshees initially enjoyed exculsive operation on the southeast bench, and the desirability of this location coupled with the building restrictions imposed by the developers brought them considerable success despite relatively small promotional efforts. Within two years Westminster Heights had grown "from an alfalfa field to a full-fledged residence district," by 1910 boasting "twenty of the finest bungalows to be found in all of Salt Lake City."

The popularity of the subdivision stemmed from its portrayal as an area offering "high class at reasonable prices," situated in an attractive bench setting away from the smoke and congestion of the city and graced with views of the valley and mountains. Homes built by the Dunshees reflected quality in design, materials and workmanship, and each was said to possess an individual character. A quiet residential environment was assured by the Dunshees' restrictive covenants designed to preclude shacks, commercial/industrial buildings and the like. Lot buyers were required to spend a minimum of \$3,000 to \$4,000 on homes along Westminster Avenue. Only single, private dwellings could be built, with a setback of at least twenty feet from the front walk. Outbuildings were not permitted until after construction of the main residence, thereby preventing erection of residential shacks under the guise of outbuildings.

Building sites were fully improved by the developers, who provided Westminster Heights with graded, tree lined streets, cement walks and curbs and electric, telephone and water utilities. Cement walks and curbs along Westminster Avenue, between 1300 East and 1500 East, were laid during the spring of 1910, concurrent with the opening of that section of the subdivision.

Though located farther from Salt Lake City's business district than most subsequent east bench developments, Westminster Heights nonetheless offered conveniences to the commuter, being situated on the Sugar House street car line and later served by the 1500 East line as well. The Sugar House commercial district and Westminster College were also close at hand.

The Dunshee brothers catered to upper middle class buyers, reporting in April of 1910 that "a hundred business and professional men have bought and will build their homes" in Westminster Heights. Among notable residents locating on Westminster Avenue were John D. Emmert, general sales agent for Central Coal and Coke Company, at 1343 Westminster and Dr. David H. Lewis, eye, ear, nose and throat specialist, at 1403 Westminster. A Mission bungalow was built in 1911 for Harry Morlan, manager of Postal Telegraph-Cable Company. Other home buyers included Cash Sonneborn,

owner of O.K. Beauty and Barber Shop; Herman Sunderlich, owner of Auto Supply Company; Urie Hiskey, employee of Warnock Insurance Company; Oscar W. Johnson, salesman, and Lloyd Ewing, representative of clothing manufacturers Bagley Underhill Company.

The Dunshee Brothers each built their own residences on Westminster Avenue. Earl constructed a Pueblo style house at 1379 Westminster, residing there until moving to nearby Hollywood Avenue in 1918. In 1911 Clark built his home, a stucco Mission bungalow, probably at 1388 Westminster (though listed at that time as 1414 Westminster). He moved two years later to Westmoreland Place, the next subdivision to be developed by the Dunshees. After developing most of Westminster Heights and Westmoreland Place, the brothers left the Salt Lake area in 1922. Clark relocated in the Los Angeles area, while Earl moved to Provo and later to Los Angeles.

Westminster Avenue is historically significant as a section of the initial residential subdivision of the southeast bench district of Salt Lake City, and as an early example of the use of building restrictions to regulate the makeup of the community. Architecturally it possess a unifying ambience, with a concentration of excellent examples of representative styles of the period. It is therefore recommended that the portion of Westminster Avenue described above be designated a Salt Lake City Conservation District.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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"Record in Southeast Addition," Salt Lake Tribune, April 17, 1910, p. 22.

"Realty Market Looking Better," Salt Lake Tribune, May 22, 1910, p. 16.

"Westminster Heights Building Boom Still On," Salt Lake Tribune, May 21, 1911, p. 27.

"Southeast Bench Realty is Active," Salt Lake Tribune, May 5, 1912, p. 26.

"A New Westminster Heights Home," Salt Lake Tribune, May 5, 1912, p. 27.

"A New Westminster Heights Bungalow," Salt Lake Tribune, May 12, 1912, p. 26.

"Work Progressing in Westminster," Salt Lake Tribune, May 12, 1912, p. 27.

"Real Estate Market Greatly Improved," Salt Lake Tribune, May 26, 1912, p. 26.

"A Westminster Heights Mission Home," Salt Lake Tribune, June 9, 1912, p. 27.

"State and City Enjoy Period of Prosperity," Salt Lake Tribune, May 11, 1913, p. 25.

"Business Booming in Subdivision," Salt Lake Tribune, May 18, 1913, p. 20.

Earl Dunshee, obituary. Salt Lake Tribune, December 17, 1954, p. B-8.

Advertisements:

"Westminster Heights," Salt Lake Tribune, May 10, 1910, p. 24.

R. L. Polk & Company. Salt Lake City Directory. Salt Lake City: R. L. Polk & Co., 1908-1922.